

ANSWERING ISKCON

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Why only Krishna is not Supreme Part 1

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Many Iskconites claim that Krishna is the only ultimate Supreme God and the concept that all other deities are mere demigods. They claim that the Shastras say so, where do they get this claim from. Primarily from Bhagavat Gita, Bhagavatam and Brahma Samhita. As of now in this post I will primarily concentrate on the Bhagavat Gita and the Bhagavatam. Take their strongest arguments and refute them proving that their claims are not valid. We will also look at how they even use Adi Shankara to prove their case, so let us look at Bhagavat Gita, the strongest argument any Iskconite can give from the

Bhagavat Gita are the verses 7:7 , and 14:27 . There may be many other verses but in my opinion these are the strongest support they have to support that only Krishna is Supreme. Rest whatever they quote from Vibhuti Yoga really doesn't count. Reason being that Saguna Brahman also includes everything . Now let us examine the verses

Chapter 7 , 7th verse

mattah parataram nanyat
kincid asti dhananjaya
mayi sarvam idam protam
sutre mani-gana iva

SYNONYMS

mattah—beyond Myself; parataram—superior; na—not; anyat—anything else; kincit—something; asti—there is; dhananjaya—O conquerer of wealth; mayi—in Me; sarvam—all that be; idam—which we see; protam—strung; sutre—on a thread; mani-gana—pearls; iva—likened.

I have taken the verse from Prabhupada's Bhagavat Gita as it is.

I will summarise what he has said , then I will look at the Shankara Bhashya , see what Shankara says about this and how his approach is actually .

Prabhupada gives 1 quote from Brahma Samhita and 2 quotes from Shwetashwatara Upanishad , so Brahma Samhita is as follows .

"Brahma-samhita: isvarah paramah krsnah sac-cid-ananda-vigraha; that is, the Supreme Absolute Truth Personality of Godhead is Lord Krsna, who is the primeval Lord, the reservoir of all pleasure, Govinda, and the eternal form of complete bliss and knowledge"

These are his words , then he quotes further 2 more verses

"Svetasvatara Upanisad: tato yad uttarataram tad arupam anamayam ya etad vidur amrtas te bhavanti athetare duhkham evapi yanti. "In the material world Brahma, the primeval living entity within the universe, is understood to be the supreme amongst the demigods, human beings and lower animals. But beyond Brahma there is the Transcendence who has no material form and is free from all material contaminations. Anyone who can know Him also becomes transcendental, but those who do not know Him suffer the miseries of the material world."

Then he quotes one more verse from the same Upanishad to prove that , Brahman is Saguna only .

“vedaham etam purusam mahantam aditya-varnam tamasah parastat
tam eva vidvan amṛta iha bhavati nanyah pantha vidyate ayanaya
yasmat param naparam asti kincid yasmannaniyo na jyayo 'sti kincit

“I know that Supreme Personality of Godhead who is transcendental to all material conceptions of darkness. Only he who knows Him can transcend the bonds of birth and death. There is no way for liberation other than this knowledge of that Supreme Person”

Hence in this way Prabhupada establishes that Supreme Brahman is Saguna only and not Nirguna .

Now before even looking at what Prabhupada says let us see what Adi Shankara has to say about this .

There is naught else higher than I, O

Dhananjaya: in Me all this is woven as clusters of gems on a string.

There is no other cause besides Me, the Supreme Lord I alone am the cause of the universe. Wherefore all beings as well as the whole of this universe are woven in Me, as a cloth in the warp, clusters of beads on a string.

That is all, notice that Shankara doesn't get jumpy about Brahman being Saguna or Nirguna he simply writes what the verse is all about.

I will now provide my counter analysis , I will not take the verse from Brahma Samhita now since not even other Vaishnava Sampradayas consider it to be authoritative. Now the verse which he quotes is talking about Nirguna Brahman only the verse Prabhupada quotes is in Chapter 3 verse 10, since in the same chapter , verse 11 says the following

Sarvaannashiro greevaha Sarva Bhuta guhaashayaha sarvavyaapti sa
Bhagawanstasmaat sarvagataha Shivaha

Meaning the Lord who is using all the necks and heads who is present in all beings who is all pervasive and blissful , such a Lord is present. Hence this shows Nirguna Brahman only , so Arupam doesn't mean Transcendental form but means formless only , now the verse Prabhupada takes again is Chapter 3 verse 8

vedaham etam purusam mahantam aditya-varnam tamasah parastat
tam eva vidvan amṛta iha bhavati nanyah pantha vidyate ayanaya
yasmat param naparam asti kincid yasmannaniyo na jyayo 'sti kincit

Vedaham - I know , etam -him , Purusham- The immanent Mahaantam-Great ,
Adityavarnam- like a Sun , Tamasaha Parastat- Beyond darkness .

tam eva- him only ,vidvan- knowing ,

amṛta iha bhavanti)- You become immortal here only , nanyah pantha vidyate ayanaaya- There is no other path or way.

"yasmāt param naparam asti kincid yasmānnaniyo na jyayo 'sti kincit"

That which is the highest, that from which nothing else exists separately. No one greater than it exists. Hence we have shown clearly that what is established through the Upanishadic verses is Nirguna Brahman only, this makes Prabhupada's claim without any meaning. Hence we can easily interpret the verse Matteh Parataram naasti as nothing higher or separate exists from me, this means Shri Krishna refers to his immanent Nirguna aspect not Saguna Aspect.

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